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which make individuality, though sometimes they seem to divide, really unite us; and therefore above all else it reverences and respects these. And justice, if it is to be satisfactory, must do the same.

F. MELIAN STAWELL.

LONDON.

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## THE DRAMATIC AND ETHICAL ELEMENTS OF EXPERIENCE.

PROFESSOR J. B. BAILLIE, KING'S COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

THE subject of this paper is one which experience is constantly suggesting to the reflective mind. The problem it raises is one of the most perplexing in practical life, and touches some of the profoundest issues of philosophy. At this time I wish to consider a few aspects of the subject, more by way of an introduction to the problem it involves than anything more comprehensive. I shall not try so much to offer a solution of the various questions it raises. That would carry us further into metaphysics than would be desirable in this paper. I shall rather undertake the simpler task, but by no means the least important task, of stating the question as clearly as I can, and of seeing what the issues involved are, and what a solution has to attempt to accomplish. In philosophy as in practical life, much, indeed a very great deal, is gained if we can only see clearly what we want to do, and what we have to aim at.

The problem is not a matter merely for academic discussion. It faces us every day, as we shall see at once if we consider certain situations, involving quite different judgments about human action. A man, *e. g.*, aims at fulfilling a comprehensive moral purpose, the reform of a social evil, the cure of a disease that is sapping the life of thousands, the accumulation of a store of wealth, the

realization of a literary or public ambition, the rescue of a fellow-creature in an hour of danger, the ruin of another's plans or hopes. He proceeds a certain length, he is at the point of achieving the end of his desire, when, as we say, suddenly and without warning his activity is intercepted sharply and finally, and his career of moral effort ends in disaster to himself and his cause. This clearly is not an imaginary or unreal experience; it is one with which we are all too familiar, and becomes more familiar as life means more for us. We could illustrate it from the side of comedy as well as from the side of tragedy. For in both there is presented an aspect of man's experience where the efforts of his will are thwarted by agencies which lie outside the seriousness of his own moral purposes, where his moral actions become part, and are seen to be part, of a plan wider than that covered by his own foresight. Here the nature of his act has to be transmuted into other than moral terms if we are to get at its larger meaning, simply because, if not so considered, it is fragmentary, unreasonable and unintelligible.

Take again the judgments which we pass on men and actions in such cases. From the point of view of the man's own purposes and the effort he exerts to attain them, we say that the man is a good man or a bad man, a man of noble intentions or of evil ends. But when his plans are cut short, when his life is held up in mid-career of useful and valuable citizenship, we say "how sad"; "it is pitiful," "pathetic"; he is a "creature of destiny"; "fate is against him"; he is the creature of "accident" or "fortune"; his moral efforts seem "fruitless"; his moral struggles seem "wasted energy." In the case of the former, the moral aspect of his life, we praise or blame him, honor or condemn him, and express our judgments of his life accordingly; and do so in the manifold ways in which approval and disapproval can be expressed by mankind. When we take up the other point of view we neither praise nor blame, we

neither approve nor disapprove; we pity and regret, we sympathize, or we even turn away in horror from the truth, or again marvel at the spectacle presented before us.

All this is familiar to anyone with the most ordinary experience of life. As so much fact, it is indubitable that we do take up these different attitudes toward human action and judge them from these different points of view. In ordinary life we are content to accept the fact that there is this twofold way of looking at man's deeds, and to make these judgments without considering the matter further. Human life is too full of the claims of the moment to be arrested permanently with problems about the meaning of it all. If one type of judgment does not exhaust all we have to say, we make another equally isolated judgment and pass on, satisfied with a rough and ready summing up of the case.

But most of us at some hours, and some of us at all hours, find ourselves thrown back on a further question regarding this situation. We feel there is something in the case calling for consideration; and this for primarily two reasons, which affect people differently according to their interest in the question. Some are pulled up by the contrast between the seriousness of the agent's moral purpose to himself or to others and the apparent futility of his efforts. They see, *e. g.*, that the high devotion to a supreme moral end which absorbed the agent's whole energy, and gave to his life a meaning and a value, is thrust aside by forces apparently alien to and certainly distinct from his moral end. They ask themselves, Is this moral purpose so supremely important after all? Was it worth while? Was it the complete meaning of his life as he (the agent) seemed to think it was? In short, when such things happen, has morality the last word to say in man's life? Are moral ends so permanent as to justify this whole-hearted devotion, which has been thus suddenly annihilated?

That is how one of the problems which we are to consider arises in the reflective mind.

Another line of reflection meets the same question. The two kinds of judgment we have mentioned are entirely different, and yet they are made about the same object, namely the agent's life and conduct. One kind of judgment praises, the other does not and refuses to praise—it acquiesces. In virtue of the first, we say the agent ought or ought not to have done this or that; in other words, the action might or might not have taken place but for the man's "will." In the other form of judgment we take the whole train of events to be inevitable: "it is so;" "it could not be otherwise;" *i. e.*, the action could not have taken place except as it did. How are these diverse judgments upon the same fact to be true at the same time? How are they to be reconciled, if reconciled they can be? Is one a subservient element in the complete meaning of the other, or is there some other idea or expression which contains both? That some reconciliation is required we must admit, for it is one and the same object, namely the action and life of the individual, about which these diverse statements are made.

These different forms in which the questions about the situation appear doubtless involve one another. They are the aspects the situation presents to us when we are induced to raise the simplest questions about it.

It is obvious that if we are to get nearer to the truth than the most superficial and off-hand solution we must have a clear notion of the sphere of fact to which each specific feature refers; we must make up our minds at the start regarding the range and limits of judgments of praise and blame on the one hand, and the sphere within which expressions of pity and fear apply on the other.

What then is the area of human experience to which, and to which only, moral judgments apply? Stated briefly, we may say that this is determined by the life of

man consciously and purposely directed toward union with his fellows in a society composed of his fellows. We shall find that all judgments of approval or the reverse imply this as the ultimate substance to which they refer. So true is this that we can safely say life in a society and moral approval go together: where we approve an action or a character, there we have a social whole of some sort; where we have a social whole, there we have judgment of approval or disapproval. For judgments of approval are not merely passed on others; they apply to ourselves *in the same sense*. Sometimes we lay stress on one of these elements, *e. g.*, we approve or disapprove the lives of others; sometimes we apply the judgment to ourselves in our own conduct. But that is a matter of emphasis, for the purposes of the occasion in hand. In all cases the judgment involves a reference to ourselves as well as to others. Thus if we explicitly approve the action of others, we at the same time implicitly mean that we should do the same in similar circumstances, for the end it realizes satisfies a standard, acknowledged as controlling the action of men in relation to their fellows. And similarly with the proper changes when we pass moral judgments on ourselves.

Moreover, in passing a judgment of approval or disapproval we always imply that the action might or might not have taken place, no matter what actually happened. There is no meaning in approving an act which would have happened whether the agent put forward effort or not. We should not praise or blame the agent, any more than we should praise or blame a sunset or a waterfall for being or not being what they are. The possibility of the agent putting forward or withholding effort in the performance of the act is precisely the reason for our judgment when the effort has been exerted.

There are, of course, other elements in the moral life besides those mentioned; but these are fundamental and are sufficient for our purpose here. The area of the moral life is defined by the relation of man to his fellows

in a whole or a society; the maintenance of that whole or society by the conscious pursuit of ends shared in by ourselves and others constitutes the sphere of what we call moral effort. These ends may or may not be realized by our acts and our desires: our judgment of approval or disapproval expresses whether or not, and the extent to which, the acts or emotions of the individual agent conform to those ends.

So much for the general character of one side of the problem. If we reflect on what it involves we shall see, *first*, that it does not cover the whole of man's life, and *second*, that so far as it goes it is an essential and supreme form of his activity, without which he would not be man at all. It does not cover the whole of his life, because he has relations to other facts and things besides his fellows. He stands in a certain relation to "nature" which is common to man and to the brute creation, which works by its own laws independently of man, and over which at the very best he has only partial control. Thus, *e. g.*, man has no power to control an earthquake; he cannot, or at least he did not, make the seas and the mountains and the streams which drain its valleys. He uses but does not create facts of nature. Nature, in virtue of its own laws, asserts itself in spite of man's efforts, and may annihilate him and his purposes altogether. Yet nature is indissolubly bound up with man, and man with nature. To separate himself from it is impossible; nay, it provides in large measure the means and conditions of his own preservation, of his own existence along with his fellows in society. Hence arises the question of nature as such being independent of man's moral life; it may aid or hinder, support or interrupt the process of his moral life. That is the first point: man's moral life has limits, and his moral life may be invaded by forces and agencies beyond his control.

But, again, the second point has to be noted carefully: man's moral purposes are supreme in importance and value in his own life. He is only man by living in and

sharing the life of a society of his fellows. To be a man is to be a social unit, and *to maintain the social whole by continuous effort is to be moral*. It is impossible therefore to give up moral ends; to give them up is to cease to exist. From this arises what we call the earnestness or seriousness of the moral life. It has this character because it is our only way of being ourselves, being men. No matter what other forces there be outside man's moral life, the purposes which constitute that life are absolutely important to him and inseparable from him.

If we bear these two points in mind, the problem we raised at the outset will gradually gain in clearness and significance. For what we have already said has indicated how that very problem must arise.

So far we have dealt with one side of the question—the range and limits of the moral life. Now we come to the other side—the character of that which bounds and interrupts the aims of morality in the way revealed by those facts of experience mentioned at the beginning.

Primarily the facts are to be described by contrast to man's moral life. They consist in whatever does *not* lie within the power of moral beings, either separately as individual moral agents, or jointly as a social whole. One source from which such facts come has already been indicated—nature and natural forces. There are two other sources. There are the restrictions imposed upon individuals by their own finiteness, their specific kind of capacity and endowment which constitute them what they are, which they did not make, which are there, so to speak, to start with, which cannot be altered, and which vary from individual to individual and society to society. There can be no doubt that this exists; one man cannot achieve as much or the same thing as another. No man has it in his power to originate the powers which he is to exercise; he works within a certain range of possibility, the bounds of which are set to him and set for him, and are limited in extent and in content. There is again an-



other source of the facts we are describing, and that is the source to which we trace both our own existence and the existence of nature, and which, in the language of religion, we describe as God, or, in more general language, the Absolute Whole which contains all objects and all forces, human and infrahuman and suprahuman. The operation of this Reality is not looked on as exactly the same as that either of ourselves or of nature. It appears as what we call an all-controlling fate, Destiny, Providence. We should, for example, ascribe the processes of an earthquake to nature; but we should ascribe the maintenance of an orderly plan in all the workings of the physical universe to this Absolute Reality. And again we should not confine the term Destiny solely to the operation of those finite restrictions within which we each severally realize our moral life. No doubt we might and ultimately must trace both nature as such or our own restricted powers to this one source. But in ordinary life we do not at once do so; and our general view of the situation will not be immediately affected if we keep them distinct for the time being.

Now there are many different ways in which all of the factors just mentioned operate upon the sphere of moral purpose. But in general they do so in two forms—*i. e.*, in the form which we call accident, and in the form which we call necessity. These, indeed, are in a sense only two ways of describing the same thing. The root idea in both is independence of our moral ends, of those purposes directly or indirectly within our power to carry out. An accident is an event which lies beyond the sphere of our purpose and cuts across the process of realizing it. Thus, *e. g.*, a man is fulfilling the round of his day's work, when the roof of the building in which he works gives way and permanently interrupts his activity; a slate falls off the roof just at the moment a passer-by is walking below and injures him; the machinery of a ship cracks while a traveler is taking a voyage. In such cases we have what we call an accident, something that

has happened directly affecting but beyond the range of our own conscious purpose. Moreover, an accident is always a detail, an event or a mere discrete series; and we take it in isolation and keep it in isolation as long as we speak of it as an accident. When we trace the course of such events, see them connected as a continuous sequence, then we find that what happened was not isolated but was part of a system. In that case we speak of it not as an accident but as a certainty; it was bound to happen, was necessitated. But here again we have the same characteristic. What was bound to happen, and could not have been prevented by and yet interfered with the process of the realization of our purpose, is just something that is independent of our ends. Hence the view so often expressed that accidents are just what we cannot explain, *i. e.*, are isolated; and again that there is no accident when we explain how it came about, that is, when it is shown to form part of a continuity.<sup>1</sup>

In the form, then, of accidents or necessities, these factors provide elements that enter into our moral experience and yet are neither derived from it nor modifiable by it nor dependent upon it. Accidents or necessities come from a source beyond our power, and so beyond the moral life. What we say of them, therefore, is not that we approve or disapprove of them, but simply that they *are*, and are controlled by laws and principles other than those that govern the moral life. They may assist the moral life, and our pursuit of moral ends; as, for example, when a favorable breeze brings the merchant home at the precise time which will further his commercial interests, or when a shower of rain falls precisely when the despairing farmer needs it for his crops,

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<sup>1</sup> What these positions involve we need not stop to consider. They bear out what we have said, that accident and necessity can be looked on as aspects of the same fact, the one expressing the discrete details as such, the other the continuous system as such. For our argument, therefore, they have the same significance, and do not raise separate problems.

or when a man's great powers of intellect and reliability of will gain him a position over a crowd of his fellows. As every man knows to his own cost, accidents may be just as cruelly against him. But whether they favor or check the realization of his aims, in both cases, as we say, they are beyond his control; they just happen and lie outside the scope of his responsible moral purpose.

Here, then, we can see the range of facts belonging to this other side of the problem we raised at the start. Their character is that they appear as necessity, fate, destiny, or as accident, as fortune, as capricious incalculable events. They may enter to any extent into the moral life; they even condition the very existence of the moral life. Our statements about them do not consist of approvals or disapprovals, but of statements of what simply *is*, and of what has, over and above their bare existence, the quality of being favorable or unfavorable to our specific moral aims. They can be either helpful or the reverse, just because they lie apart from, operate independently of, and are derived from sources distinct from, our own moral effort and purpose.

We are now in a position to discover how there may be a clash of operations between the two sides of our experience to which we have called attention. Be it noted at once that they are inseparable, the moral side and the non-moral side, from whatever source it comes. Man's moral life is inseparable from nature and natural forces, as we have already stated; the very food which supplies the basis of physical life, the securing of which constitutes so large an area of his moral life, is derived from that source. It is evident again that man's moral life is inseparable from his own mental equipment, his intellectual powers, his hereditary endowment, his resources and possibilities. It is equally evident that man as a finite being, sharing only a fragment of the activity of the life of the universe but sharing it in a certain way and to a certain degree, is

inseparable from the one Whole of which all finite individualities are but parts and elements.

It is precisely this very distinctness of the moral life from these other factors to which we have referred, combined with their inseparable relation, that is the source of the problem we raised, and of the different judgments we pass on human situations. Whenever there is such an invasion of the moral life and purposes of the individual on the part of those other factors mentioned, as either subordinates moral ends to the latter or produces a serious interruption to the successful realization of moral ends, then we have the elements of a dramatic situation. There is nothing dramatic in a moral condition as such; it is one which ought or ought not to be; that is all. There is nothing dramatic in, *e. g.*, the processes of nature as such; they simply *are* such and such, and their course is governed by what we call necessary laws. But when a being who ought or ought not to be in such and such a condition *has* to be in a given situation in spite of or along with his moral end, there we have the possibilities of a drama. There is no drama without personality, without the deliberate and stormy struggle for supreme moral ends. But there is no drama unless this personality is laboring toward fulfilment in the midst of conditions alien to and invading his moral effort. An essential aspect of the drama lies thus in the fact of conflict of alien elements in human experience. Moreover, the interest of the drama is centered, so to say, in the success or failure of one of the parties to the conflict, namely the personality of the agent. We are not concerned directly with the significance of these non-moral agencies *per se*, but only in so far as they exercise an effect on and within the life of the spiritual agent whom they invade, only so far as they bear on the triumph or failure of the agent. Again, in every dramatic situation the whole meaning and interest center round one essential factor in the moral life as such, the limitation of moral ends by non-moral factors. The dramatic situation of the

individual is the expression in, it may be, an acute form of the essential life of morality *as such*. It is not merely an individual episode we are called on to witness. It is the fate of morality itself as a form of human activity. It is the fate, therefore, of our own ends and purposes in the plan of things which is presented before us in the drama.

For this reason we find that, *e. g.*, in tragedy we are moved by "pity and fear." Pity and fear imply sympathy; and sympathy is a relation of like to like, of our self with another self. But it is sympathy of a peculiar kind. The sympathy is not mere fellow-feeling with the other individual; for that involves merely an imaginative placing of ourselves in his position. In tragedy we do not so much imaginatively place ourselves in his position; rather the very nature of his position compels us to identify ourselves with his lot. He is representing the universal condition in which man's personality exists. His position, therefore, *is* our position, for his position is that of human personality itself, and that *is* our life.<sup>2</sup>

That, then is the general character of the dramatic situation as distinct from the merely moral situation. It is a conflict within the life of a moral personality. It takes place between the moral purposes constituting his very being, and agencies of an alien character which invade these purposes and their successful operation through his effort. And it takes place necessarily because his experience, as a whole, involves the presence of these agencies.

It is easy to see, by the aid of this interpretation, the different ways in which the dramatic situation may and does arise. The form in a given connection depends entirely on the character of the invading agency. It may come from the forces of nature, disaster, "accident" or fortune. The relation of the moral purpose to this gives

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<sup>2</sup> Hence our "pity" and "fear" are always as much for *ourselves* as for the individual overwhelmed by a tragic situation. Similarly in the merriment of comedy our pleasure as spectators—so high because the end is to be joyous and not disastrous—has an *universal* basis.

us one kind of drama. It may come from the play of one moral character on another, each following the "bent" of his own constitution, his limited range of possibilities and ends; a bent from which the individual cannot escape, and which leads him or her in a direction producing conflict and clash between finite moral end and finite moral end, finite personality and finite personality. Much of the best tragedy is of this kind, and much of the best comedy. It may, again, arise through the operation in an individual life of the agencies and conditions imposed by the destiny controlling all things, and from which the individual cannot escape by his own effort.

A particular case of this last type is where a conflict of necessary ends within the individual life takes place in such a way that no actual unification of the ends is possible; and where therefore the conflict can only be stilled by ruin and disaster to the personality. An example of this is found in *Antigone*, or again in the fate of *Otilie* in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In such cases the conflict is due to the fact that the conditions under which the individual's moral life is lived produce a situation where two supreme moral ends demand satisfaction, two supreme moral laws demand obedience from the individual, while at the same time submission to one involves rejection of the other. In the case of *Antigone* it was the opposing claims of the law of the family and the law of the state as administered by the ruler. They meet in *Antigone's* life only to present conflicting demands. Had a higher law satisfying both claims been found, the dramatic situation would have been avoided; for then *Antigone* could only as a moral agent adopt the higher law. If this had been rejected she would have been herself culpable, and the result would not call forth pity and fear, but moral disapproval. But in the absence of such a higher law the conflict was morally insoluble; and since it was unavoidable the situation became dramatic. In many cases a higher law may exist, or be discoverable, and yet not be found by the individual, either through lack of opportunity, or lack of capacity. In these cases the situation is again dramatic; the drama is created by the limitations of circumstance or of mental endowment. The position is pathetic; moral categories do not apply. But in some of these cases it is often possible to find that the individual has not used his powers to meet the situation, and that the conflict could have been avoided had he done so. Hence the practical difficulty in cases of this kind of distinguishing between a culpable blunder and a hopeless tragedy.

Again the dramatic situation may take two specifically different forms. On the one hand the conflict may be temporary, and be mainly sustained by the play of accident not ultimately harmful to the individual. The accident thwarts his purposes and perplexes him for a time to any extent without, however, absolutely overthrowing him or his ends. Ultimately, and in the long run, it is found to support or further his own personality and assist his own fulfilment. The process of conflict is annoying and perplexing, even painful to some extent; but the issue is happy and joyous. This dramatic situation is the feature of Comedy. The alternation of success and failure in the process of arriving at the result, combined with the knowledge that the issue is favorable to the personality involved constitutes the source of the merriment and humor the situation affords, first to the spectators and afterwards to the individual concerned in the drama.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, a conflict may take place which leads to the ruin and disaster of the moral personality, and the overthrow of his finite life and its plans. Here the issue, whatever it be, is arrived at through the waste of moral life in some form or other, and does not lead to the fulfilment of finite personality at all. This constitutes the dramatic situation of Tragedy. It may have, as we say, a "fitting" termination as regards certain individuals in the situation. "Eternal justice" may be triumphant over the wrongdoer; but even so, the result is arrived at through the waste and ruin of the good man, too; and therein lies the sting of the tragedy. The punishment of the wrongdoer is only to be brought about by disaster to the good man. The punishment is a moral result, not tragic; the ruin of the good, tragic, not moral.

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<sup>4</sup> The various kinds of comedy arise in the way in which the elements above indicated are arranged, from the degree of seriousness of the purposes at stake, the dignity of the persons concerned, the triviality or otherwise of the circumstances which form the setting of the situation and the transparency of the ultimate issue. Hence comedy ranges from pure farce up to a situation just short of tragedy.

It is important to note that the conflict spoken of arises out of a conflict of elements within a personal life, which in some sense is, and must be considered to be, a whole. Some kind of ultimate reconciliation is therefore at once presupposed by the conflict and demanded by the situation to justify its existence. There could be no conflict of the elements unless there were some unity to be found in a single plan or principle. And there can be no rationale in the conflict unless that unity appears at the end as the reconciliation of the elements involved in the conflict. In comedy the reconciliation is brought about by the course of events; in tragedy it is not, it remains a demand. Hence it is that tragedy seems so often to indicate the presence of an irrational element, a surd, in human experience. The solution of the conflict in tragedy does not lie in the circumstances or the development of the plot. It is only to be found, if found at all, by going beyond or behind the actual drama, by appealing to a deeper or more comprehensive principle. The appeal is made away from the dramatic outlook either to the comprehensive consolations of the religious attitude toward experience, or to the conceptual interpretation of experience by speculative reflection. In the former case the tragedies of human existence are looked upon, so to say, as part of the larger *Divina Commedia* of spiritual life;<sup>5</sup> in the latter case the apparent irrationality of the tragic situation is distilled in the pure ether of *νόησις νόησεως*.

One more point in conclusion. It will be seen from what has been said, that the dramatic situation is an inseparable phase of all human life. Doubtless it is best

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<sup>5</sup> An optimistic type of religion is bound to show all tragedies to be incidents in a larger plan whose issue is joyous. "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is most interesting thus to find that the essential principle of Comedy is considered a truer resolution of the conflicts of life than Tragedy. Dante's great poem is an illustration of this view that Comedy is higher than Tragedy. Hence, doubtless, the title of the poem.



exhibited, especially perhaps in tragedy, in the case of great and outstanding personalities. The skill of the dramatic artist in large measure consists in his careful selection of his characters and situations for the purpose of conveying dramatic effect. But the dramatic situation is inseparable from human life, not only in all its forms but in all its stages. This is acknowledged when we speak of the tragedies and comedies of child-life. And it appears historically in the incessant reappearance in literary form of dramatic presentations of life at the lowliest levels of human existence.

J. B. BAILLIE.

KING'S COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

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## ETHICS AND LAW.

CHARLES W. SUPER.

“SINCE law is subordinate to ethic, or, in other words, since both those who command and those who obey are bound morally to regard, in the last resort, the commands of the moral law, it follows that the ultimate ends of law are suspended upon that of ethic, deducible from it, and justifiable by it. The logic of law is a reproduction of that of ethic, but applied to overt acts only.” The scholarly author of “The Theory of Practice” has no doubts on the relation of law to ethic, a position which he believes to have established in other parts of his work. He declares further that there is continually in progress an alteration or conflict “and at every step of it, the appeal always lies from the law to the principles and logic of ethic.” Surely, this “is a hard saying: who can hear it?” It is perhaps true that a good deal of modern legislation has an ethical end in view; but the history of legislation is very far from bearing out the assertion of Mr. Hodgson. In organized society there is in progress now, as there has always